

INTO THE DEPTHS.

Wonders of West Virginia Never
Dreamed of

IN OUR BEST GEOGRAPHIES.

The Marvels at the Headwaters of
the Elk River,

WHERE STREAM DISAPPEARS

NEAR THE COMMON CORNER OF
POCAHONTAS, RANDOLPH AND
WEBSTER COUNTIES—MR. H. U.
MAXWELL, THE INTELLIGENCER'S
BRILLIANT EXPLORER,
DISCOVERS A SUBTERRANEAN
CAVERN WHOSE POSSIBILITIES
ARE GREATER THAN THE FAM-
OUS MAMMOTH CAVE, AND
WHOSE MAJESTIC GRANDEUR
AWES THE BEHOLDER—A
THRILLING EXPLOIT INTO THE
BOWELS OF THE EARTH.

Special Correspondence of Intelligencer.

BEVERLY, W. Va., July 27.—The fact is proven so far as it can be proved without actual discovery, that a subterranean cavern of vast proportions exists under the headwaters of Elk river near the common corner of Pocahontas, Randolph and Webster counties. I recently spent a week in that region searching for an opening into the cavern, and although not successful, yet I saw enough to convince me that the cave is there and that some one more fortunate than myself will some time discover an opening leading to it. It is ever explored, it will probably be found to surpass the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. My attention was called to the subject by George W. Prints, who had observed that over an area of about twenty square miles there are no streams of water which do not disappear in sink-holes, and that all these sink-holes appear to lead in the direction of Elk river, which also sinks.

At a point in Pocahontas county, on the Elk, thirty miles above Addison, I saw a crevice in the mountain side into which the entire river flows except in time of a freshet. But it is impossible to find a passage into the subterranean channel of the river at that place. I followed down the dry channel of the river six miles in Randolph county, and saw the river burst out of the mountain. Its course underground was through the Greenbrier limestone, and any one acquainted with the geology of the region will not doubt that vast caverns exist beneath the ground. A stream one-fifth as large as Elk river has cut caverns thousands of feet in extent.

A Disappearing River.
A citizen of that county, whose word I have no reason to doubt, told me that two years ago the bottom dropped out of the river, forming an opening large enough to admit a small cabin, and that the whole river plunged into it and disappeared in a cavern, the extent of which could be judged only from the fact that no bottom was visible. This opening was a mile above the one where the river now disappears. A subsequent flood filled it with bowlders and the river flowed over it.

Inasmuch as all the sink-holes in the vicinity seemed to lead to the underground passage, there seemed a possibility of reaching the cavern by one of them. The largest in the vicinity of the river was selected. A turbulent stream, flowing probably a barrel of water a minute, comes down the mountain, and within a quarter of a mile of the river pours into a hole and is seen no more. The opening is a nearly circular one, in limestone, and is eighty feet in diameter. After descending fifty feet the bottom is filled with bowlders and rubble, but a passage came down the mountain, nearly large enough to walk in erect. It descends at a grade of nearly twenty degrees. Never but once in the history of the country, as the citizens told me, had so much water come down the mountain, and it was a sink-hole could not carry it off. That time it was a waterpout, and the pit into which the water poured, overflowed, and the surplus water reached the river, driving bowlders before it that would weigh tons.

I went into the pit a few rods and saw that the way was open; but having no lantern, I did not venture far. That afternoon I procured a lantern from a farmer, and he and his son went with me; but the boy would not go into the cave under any consideration, and the old man said he once had gone in 300 yards and found the passage closed up by a rock which had fallen from above. I was able to crawl under the rock, and found the passage open beyond. But the farmer's courage failed and he would go no further. It is unsafe to go in a strange cavern alone, so I returned alone, and waited for the arrival of my brother, C. J. Maxwell, and my nephew, C. W. Maxwell, who had arranged to meet me there, but had not yet come.

Three Real Dangers.

The person who explores caves must face several imaginary dangers, but only a few real ones. The people of that vicinity are as much afraid of caves as if they were the gates of hades; and yet they cannot tell you what they are afraid of. The chief dangers are three, and they are real, and should be carefully guarded against. They are, rock falling from above; chasms and precipices beneath into which one may fall, and the danger of becoming wedged in narrow passages and drowning. There is no danger of fire in any of the caves in that region, for a current of air blows out of all of them.

The next afternoon my brother and nephew came, and the following morning we went down into the sink-hole. We provided lanterns, extra oil in a bottle, in case we should exhaust what was in the lanterns; ropes for descending precipices, a measuring line to take the distance, and chalk to mark the passage to guide us upon our return. We found that the rock which had closed the former entrance was only 200 feet down, instead of 300 yards as he said. Large quantities of drift timber, logs thirty or forty feet long, were found in the cavern, having been carried in by floods. They were sometimes wedged in the galleries twenty feet above the floor. Sometimes we descended nearly perpendicularly; again the passage was horizontal, but the general descent was about twenty feet in 100. For the most part we could walk erect, and we did not have to wade much water until we had gone down 1,000 feet. There the passage grew narrow and crowded and sometimes we had trouble in keeping our lanterns above water as we crawled through the low galleries. Except for the water the cavern was not particularly dangerous, or disagreeable. We constantly expected to see the passage which we believed Elk river flowed beneath the mountain, and for that reason we pushed on farther than we would

have been justified in doing for mere curiosity to explore the small cavern we were in.

Midnight Blackness.

We found several rooms with ceilings forty or more feet high; and there were occasional stalactites; but nothing of much importance was seen. We were not able to penetrate beyond 1,800 feet, and probably 400 feet below the point of entrance. In time of drought one might go further; but we found the passages so small and the water so deep that we could not keep our large stable lanterns above water, although we still had plenty of breathing space. Beyond us we could hear the water flowing into a chasm, but we could not reach its brink in order to see what lay below. We returned, having been in the cave three hours, and being satisfied that we had almost found the object for which we were searching.

However, we were not to be baffled by one failure. That afternoon we separated, each taking a different direction, and we explored the whole region, and talked with the people about caves, of which there are dozens, and on the third day we met by appointment at Mingo, within three miles of the head spring of the Tygart river, and about five miles east of the cave which we had examined. The most promising opening into the supposed Elk river cavern was gained by the side of Mingo Knob, about four miles from Elk river. That cave was represented to us as going down almost perpendicular to an unknown depth. No man had been in it for forty years. The ghostly stories which the people told us about it was enough to make us superstitious. They said that two men went in it forty years ago. When they came out one had become insane and the other never would tell what he saw. They also said that Indians used the cavern as a dungeon into which they threw their captives and left them to die. Nevertheless we decided to try it, not taking much stock in the traditions.

Penetrated 1,800 Feet.

This cavern was quite different from the one we had explored a few days before. This had no water in it, and instead of descending by an easy grade, it went sheer down like a vast well, into midnight blackness of the unknown depths below. However, the statement that the descent was perpendicular must be somewhat qualified. It was perpendicular in places, and very steep in others, with chasms "mocking the eight with unspeakable depths." But, taken as a whole, it is not very large, if its dimensions are expressed in feet. There are probably a hundred caves in West Virginia into which a person can penetrate farther; but I know of none in which more danger exists and where there is more of the horrible to be seen and felt. I once descended 600 feet into the crater of an extinct volcano, and considered that risky; but it was not equal to this cavern in real or apparent danger, or in difficulty.

With our ropes, lanterns, an ax and chalk, we started the opening, and I followed down the dry channel of the river six miles in Randolph county, and saw the river burst out of the mountain. Its course underground was through the Greenbrier limestone, and any one acquainted with the geology of the region will not doubt that vast caverns exist beneath the ground. A stream one-fifth as large as Elk river has cut caverns thousands of feet in extent.

On the Brink of a Pit.

After looking about this room until we were satisfied, we began searching for a way to descend into the next depth. Broken rocks nearly closed the passage, but we proceeded down a very steep slope about seventy feet with ropes, and he who was in the lead, remarked that his lantern threw no light ahead, that everything looked black. Suspecting that he was about to step into water, I told him to throw a rock ahead. He did so; but instead of splashing in water, nothing was heard for several seconds, when the fall resounded far below. Instead of a pond of water, he was standing on the very brink of a pit so deep that the lantern could not get light to the bottom, and did not reflect from the sides. The rocks on which we were standing were loose, and inclined to slide over the brink. We lost no time in retreating our way to the large room. Along the floor of the room on the ex-

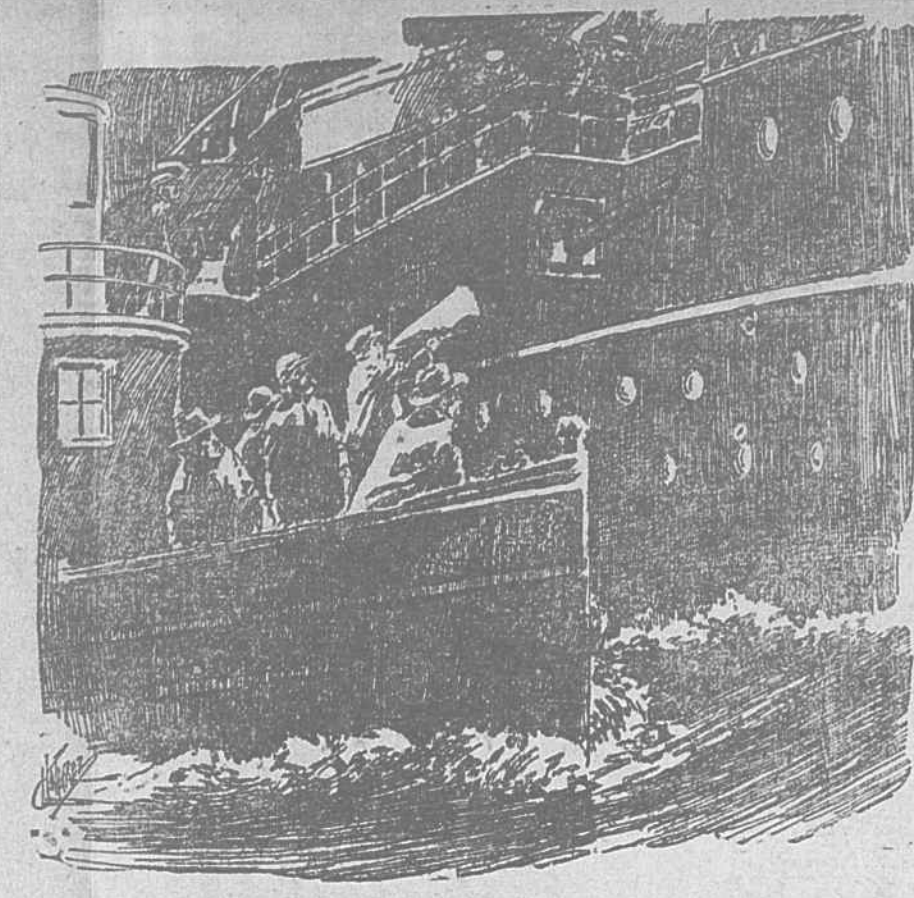
posed western side is a fissure in the limestone, from one to four feet wide and forty or fifty long. We prepared our ropes for descending into this, believing that it would lead us below. But when we had tied a rope to a lantern and had let it down, and could see no bottom, we abandoned our project of getting down in that quarter. Fortunately, we found a broken place in the precipice which had first turned us back, and we made our way down a hundred feet more, and found ourselves in another room, much larger than the one above. The roof was more than 100 feet high, as we judged. The room would seat 10,000 people. So perfect were the acoustic properties of the room, that the faintest sound could be heard in a whisper 100 feet apart. Our lanterns were not strong enough to light the whole room, and only by setting paper on fire could we see it all at once. We had our first sight of the precipice that descended us. It formed one wall of this room. Its crest was not less than ninety feet above us. The room was of irregular form with galleries and alcoves leading off. It contained no element of beauty; everything was gloomy and dim.

So Far No Further.

Down to this point the descent can be made without much danger by a good climber who knows the way and will keep his nerve steady. But in going down deeper, the danger rapidly increases, because the passages are small and there is likelihood of becoming wedged fast between rocks. We were nearly 500 feet below the surface of the earth, and had not yet found the looked-for passage leading under the mountain to the Elk river cavern. We still hoped to find it, and after a long search we found openings leading further down, but they were small. We reached an extreme depth, almost a perpendicular depth, of 600 feet. The last ninety feet was sheer down through an opening no larger than a well, and in places not eighteen inches across. It was like going down a chimney. It became so small we could go no further; and we had not found what we were looking for. We had consumed three hours in hard labor in descending that 600 feet, and it took us one hour to climb to the surface of the ground. Those who enjoy underground scenery will be repaid by going down to the floor of the second large room which is 500 feet from the entrance, but my advice is that no one should go further. There is nothing to see. But those who want to tempt fate may do so, and they will find the opening by going to the extreme north end of the gallery leading into the lower large room, and there enter a cleft in the floor which is not hard

Unloading Guns and Ammunition.

face several imaginary dangers, but only a few real ones. The people of that vicinity are as much afraid of caves as if they were the gates of hades; and yet they cannot tell you what they are afraid of. The chief dangers are three, and they are real, and should be carefully guarded against. They are, rock falling from above; chasms and precipices beneath into which one may fall, and the danger of becoming wedged in narrow passages and drowning. There is no danger of fire in any of the caves in that region, for a current of air blows out of all of them.



HOW OUR WAR NEWS IS GATHERED.

This picture shows our newspaper boat lying alongside a cruiser that has just returned from a long cruise. Our men are gathering war news from the men on board the cruiser; in this way the latest reports are obtained, the latest victory is learned, the latest negotiations are told, and by night our newspaper men have reached shore and have cabled the dispatches which go to make up the great columns of war news of the day.

to find. The rest of the way is straight down; and if one of the loose bowlders slips half a foot it will close the passage forever. It is well for those who go down to bear this in mind, as it adds materially to one's peculiar sensations as he squeezes his body through the narrow throats of the plutonic chimney.

A PECULIAR CASE.

A Woman of Some Wealth Sent to Weston. Could not Secure a Bondsman to Lure her Safe Behavior.

A woman, owning eleven houses, and reputed to possess considerable wealth, yet unable to get bond for her good behavior, was taken to Weston asylum yesterday, in charge of Miss Flora Kearns, a matron in that institution. Two days ago Squire Rogers adjudged Mrs. O. F. Barrett, insane. Mrs. Barrett is seventy-eight years of age, and recently her strange conduct necessitated inquiry as to her sanity.

She lived in the second story of the house at 10 Twenty-first street. The first floor was filled almost to the ceiling with iron, brass, and various kinds of rubbish. Mrs. Barrett being a junk dealer. Her home was viewed by the neighbors in the light of a haunted house, and little children always took good care to play their games some distance away. Several tons of iron and other metal were stored in the house.

Mrs. Barrett was supposed to possess some money, and her reputation as a miser was well sustained, but not the most ardent believer in her wealth ever dreamed of the sight that confronted the eyes of the constables who went to her home yesterday. In the informal investigation were found one \$5,000 check of deposit, another for \$3,500 and several for smaller amounts.

It was thought that the bond would be raised to avoid sending the aged woman to the asylum, but it was not furnished.

New Business Enterprise.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer. CHARLESTON, W. Va., July 29.—The secretary of state has issued the following charter: White Oak Coking Company, of Glen Jean, Fayette county, W. Va., for the purpose of mining, purchasing coal lands, manufacturing coke and carrying on a general mercantile business. Capital subscribed \$100,000. The shares are \$100 each and are held by T. T. Lewis, G. P. Daniels, of Glen

Jean, J. C. Collins, Justice Collins, of Charleston, and Isaac T. Mann, of Bluefield, W. Va.

West Virginia Notes.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer. WASHINGTON, July 29.—Alexander Elliott, of Martinsburg, was to-day upon the recommendation of Senator Elkins, appointed a special police officer under the city government here.

Because of business interests Mr. B. F. Sayre, of Granton, declined the position of police officer recently tendered him in the police department here.

Representative Dovenor was here to-day making his rounds of the departments in the interests of his constituents.

Hon. A. R. Campbell, of Wheeling, is also in the city.

Brigade Headquarters Moved.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer. CHARLESTON, W. Va., July 29.—Lieutenant Colonel S. B. Baker, of Parkersburg, having resigned owing to his own private business requiring all his time, the adjutant general has issued an order removing the brigade headquarters of the West Virginia National Guards from Parkersburg, to Charleston. Captain Simms, of the adjutant general's office, will have charge of the work until Colonel Baker's successor is named.

Charleston Newspaper Chartered.

Special Dispatch to the Intelligencer. CHARLESTON, W. Va., July 29.—The West Virginia Herald Publishing Company, of Charleston, was chartered to-day. Capital subscribed \$500. The stock is held by William P. Burkham, of Cincinnati; John W. Ehrh, Y. L. Black, R. G. Quarrier and Malcolm Jackson, of Charleston.

Mrs. Maybrick's Case.

LONDON, July 29.—In the house of commons to-day during the debate on the home office vote, Mr. Michael D'Att, member for South Mayo, broached the question of imprisonment of Mrs. Florence Maybrick and represented that she was in ill-health. Mr. Davitt said in the course of his remarks that "to release this American woman would be a small step in the direction of establishing good feeling between England and the United States." Sir Matthew White Ridley, home secretary, replied that he thought the reports of ill health were exaggerated, but he promised to make inquiries.

AN HISTORIC SONG.

Illustrating the Indomitable Spirit of Self-Defense in an Epidemic—Present to the Editor of the Intelligencer.

SIR—About half a century ago, the British arm in India met with great loss caused by an epidemic that raged with extreme violence in that country. The plague decimated the ranks of the army, and produced greater mortality than was incurred in any of the recent campaigns incident to the occupation of India by the British soldiery.

While the epidemic was at its height, an officer of the army composed a drinking song, which at that time attracted much attention as illustrating the indomitable spirit of the English soldier in times of deadly peril. The words of the song were beautiful, and when sung in chorus produced an effect exactly opposite to what one would suppose to result from a song portraying the ravages of the dying.

In 1857, when an epidemic of cholera and yellow fever was raging at Vicksburg, Miss, which carried off 10 per cent of the entire command, the officers of the 14th United States Infantry then stationed there, under command of their gallant leader, General N. A. M. Dudley, used to assemble at the Post Traders' store and sing this song, and there is every reason to believe that by indulging in such hilarity, and cultivating a spirit of indifference to the dread surroundings, the health and lives of some of them were preserved. The situation at Vicksburg is somewhat similar at this time, and although the song is old, the sentiment is ever new and fresh, and to the young soldiers now exposed to the ravages of Yellow Jack down on Cuba's miasmatic shores, it may prove interesting, though I fear the opportunity to quaff real wine will be sadly wanting amid the demolition of their surroundings, and the active opposition of modern temperance societies.

THE SONG.

We meet 'neath the sounding rafter,
And the walls around are bare;
As they shout to our souls of laughter,
It seems that the dead are there.
But stand to your glasses, steady!
We drink to our comrades' eyes;
Quaff a cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

Not here are the goblets glowing,
Not here is the vintage sweet;
The cold as our hearts are growing,
And dark as the doom we meet.
But stand to your glasses, steady!
We drink to our comrades' eyes;
One cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

Time was when we frowned at others,
We thought we were wiser then;
But now we think of their mothers,
Who hope to see them again.
Not stand to your glasses, steady!
The thought that's here the wise;
A cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

There's many a land that is shaking,
There's many a cheek that's sunk;
But soon, though the heart be breaking,
We'll drink with the wine we've drunk.
So stand to your glasses, steady!
A cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

There's a mist on the glass congealing,
'Tis the hurricane's fiery breath;
And thus does the war of the world,
Turn in the palm of the hand.
Ho! stand to your glasses, steady!
For a moment the vapor flies
A cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

Who dreads the dust returning?
Who shrinks from the sable shroud?
Here the high and haughty yearning,
Ho! stand to your glasses, steady!
The world is a world of lies;
A cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

Cut off from the land that bore us,
Betrayed by the land we find,
Where the brightest have gone before us,
Stand, stand to your glasses, steady!
'Tis all we have left to prize;
A cup to the dead already—
Hurrah for the next that dies!

Wheeler, W. Va., July 29, 1898.

HOUSEHOLD CAPITULATION.

How Santiago's Surrender Solved the Difficulty Nicely.

Washington Star: "My dear," said Mr. Bilkins, enthusiastically, as he spread his napkin on his lap. "It will take only a few minutes each day—a half hour at most—and the result will be more than a cure for the trouble. To an educated ear our method of pronouncing these Spanish names must be something weird and barbaric. We must not be influenced by the fact that friendship between these people and us is impossible. Culture demands that we become acquainted with the proper mode of speech. And what's life without culture?"

"Are you going to study Spanish?"

"We're both going to study Spanish. I came home early so's to get a start."

"When do we begin?"

"Right now. One of the hardest things to remember is that the letter 'H' is pronounced like 'H' and that sometimes the letter 'G' is pronounced in the same way."

"Why don't they say 'H' in the first place?"

"For the same reason that Homer's Iliad wasn't written in Missouri dialect. It didn't happen to come natural. After dinner we'll take the book I brought home and go to work on the alphabet and grammar. But there's no reason why we shouldn't practice right here in the meantime, so as to familiarize ourselves with the peculiarity I have mentioned."

"Yes, dear; but hadn't you better eat something?"

"I suppose so, but to tell you the truth, I am not very hungry. I don't want anything except a little bread and butter and tea, and possibly something sweet. By the way, have you any ham?"

"Why, you know dear, you said only this morning that you were getting tired of ham."

"I don't mean that. What I want is ham."

She looked greatly disturbed and he proceeded indignantly:

"Can't you understand? Or is this some joke, you're trying to play on me? I thought we'd got the business in a hole-ho-ho-natured way!"

Her face brightened.

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed. "I understand you perfectly. You mean 'Jolly, good-natured' way."

"Of course I do. Perhaps if there isn't any ham you will be kind enough to give me some of that jelly."

She passed her hand over her brow and looked down.

"That's right!" he exclaimed, raising his voice. "Don't you care. Let me starve. Turn me out on the commons to eat tin cans like a billy goat. Sit there like a Hapsburg dog or a Chinese hog. By the humphing Heremah!"

Just then the voice of a new boy who was crying an extra, arrested his attention. He rushed out and bought a paper.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed as he came in waving it around his head like a flag. "Santiago has given in. Why don't you join in and jubilate?"

"Two bottles so confused," she answered, meekly, "that I am almost afraid to hold in and hubble."

"Agatha," he said, gently, "as long as Santiago has surrendered, I don't believe there's going to be enough of it this war to make it worth while bothering. Won't you go to the cupboard and see if there isn't some of that jam left?"

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